

COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS.

Marriage and War.—The more or less sacramental ideas about marriage of the early pre-Christian nations seem to have been most highly developed among those who had won their land by the sword and had constantly to defend it. In such circumstances two things must have been obvious; firstly, the necessity of keeping up the national fighting strength; and secondly, the need of some protection for the numerous widows and orphans left by the ever-recurring wars. The first object was achieved by making the leaving of sons a religious duty incumbent on every man; the second by making the nurture of orphaned children the duty of the father's male relatives. To achieve the latter aim it was necessary to guard against doubts as to the paternity of the children; so fidelity to the marriage vow was made incumbent on women. It was not exacted from the men so long as they avoided corrupting their neighbours' wives. No other view could well have arisen in polygamous communities; and polygamy was useful as helping to keep up the national fighting strength.

Two remarkable examples of this stand out in ancient history, namely, the Jews and the early Aryan settlers in India. Both of these are specially interesting, because, with this effort to keep up their numerical strength by sanctifying marriage and encouraging large families, they combined an effort, which was really eugenic, to keep the race pure. Both races rightly believed themselves to be superior to their neighbours. The Jews had made the great advance of identifying God with righteousness, while their neighbours had no such idea. The worship of the Shining Gods, as it has come down to us in the Vedic hymns, points to religious ideas on the part of the early Aryan settlers which must have been far above those of the non-Aryan races then in India. Certainly the Aryans proved their superiority by the dominant position they eventually gained. Both Jews and Aryans had to fight for centuries to retain their ground; and both had hard work to prevent their race from

being swamped by intermarriage with their neighbours. Every reader of the Old Testament knows how strongly the Jews objected to such marriages. In India caste was the measure adopted to prevent them, and the result is that considerable sections of the population, the Brahmans and Rajputs especially, are to this day clearly of Aryan descent. The Jews have also kept their race fairly pure, in spite of their dispersion throughout the world. Both races have also increased in numbers.

In contrast with what has been done by these two national religions, combining some worldly wisdom with more distinctly spiritual aims, we may look for a moment at what has occurred under Buddhism. The teaching of Gautama caused a great spiritual uplifting in the India of his day, and has left its impress on Indian thought. But in time the creed was practically driven out of India, probably because its teaching in regard to caste cut at the root of Brahman ascendancy. Though driven out of India, it took firm hold in the countries beyond India. In China and Japan its teaching is venerated along with that of the indigenous creeds, but it was in the countries lying between India and China that it was received unreservedly and enthusiastically by all the leading races, and has become supreme. The Burmese, for instance, have been devoted Buddhists for centuries and are so still. This religion, however, is so entirely spiritual that it does not concern itself at all with such things as marriage or keeping up the nation's fighting strength. Under it marriage is merely a civil contract. The man who wishes to marry can do so without blame, but he stands on a lower spiritual level than the monk. With marriage on this basis it is scarcely wonderful that the population has never increased to anything like that which so fertile a country could easily support. Very much the same holds good in Siam and the other purely Buddhist countries. In India, on the other hand, the population has always tended to be excessive. No one can fail to admire the lofty moral and spiritual teaching of Buddhism, but it is better for any people when their Church gives some attention also to the practical needs of ordinary life.

JOHN STUART.

Disabled Soldiers and Marriage.—We have referred in a previous number to the question of the marriage of soldiers and sailors disabled in the war; and, believing as we do that mutilations have absolutely no inherited effect, and that the soldiers and sailors, as a picked body, are on the average superior to the general body of the population, we have ventured to advocate such marriages as an important means of racial repair. We are glad, therefore, to inform our readers of the record in this matter of the Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Hostel at St. Dunstan's, Regent's Park. Sir Arthur Pearson has kindly placed statistics at our disposal, which, in addition, serve to throw some light upon the magnitude of the whole problem. Of 440 blinded soldiers entering St. Dunstan's, 144 were previously married, and 296, or rather more than two-thirds, were single. Of these single men 55, or 18 per cent., have married since their disablement. It is noted that the wives are to be considered in every case as extremely suitable, and almost without exception as unusually good looking. The Directors of St. Dunstan's are to be congratulated upon this desirable policy, and it is to be hoped that the State may be induced to take account of eugenic considerations, and to make allowance in the disablement pensions for children born subsequently to disablement. R. A. F.

Children and the Land.—Sir Rider Haggard, in his speech on Empire Land Settlement, when touching on the fundamental problem of population, said: "It is only on the land, speaking generally and with exceptions, that large families are reared to-day. Don't run away with the idea that this is because I think there is any particular virtue attaching to the land, or that there children arise spontaneously. The explanation is that land-dwelling parents, especially if they are owners or have some permanent interest in their farms, have a very real, if unexpressed, desire for cheap labour. I have noticed again and again that in the nests of small holdings are found the children, but go where these are not, and you find but few children. That is one of the great reasons why a country should make every sacrifice and do everything it possibly can to encourage settlement on

the land, because children in adequate numbers are necessary to the welfare and safety of all nations."

Eugenics and Morals.—It is noted in the reports on child welfare and maternity schemes that "in practice, the mothers who have been fed are the wives of men who have long illnesses or who are of the wastrel class, and seldom earn sufficient to support their wives and families." Morally, it is clearly our duty to support and encourage all such schemes, but, eugenically, it is clearly our duty to see that this survival of the unfit is, to some extent at least, counterbalanced by the birth of the fit. N. A.

The Fertility of the Unfit.—Dr. McMurchy, who has recently published a Report on the Feeble-minded in Ontario, is evidently an ardent reformer, and to strengthen her case in Ontario has ranged the world in search of facts concerning the feeble-minded, so that her report is rather more a general than a local one. An investigation in one of the counties of Pennsylvania resulted in the unearthing of another Jukes pedigree, 508 defectives being traced back to two family groups. In this community too the fertility of the fit averaged three in a family, of the unfit, seven. N. A.

National Baby Week—July 1st-7th, 1917.—It has been decided to hold a National Baby Week from July 1st-7th. Lord Rhondda is Chairman of the Council, and all the National Children's Societies are co-operating in the movement. The Eugenics Education Society is also represented on the Committee. Information with regard to it can be obtained from The Secretary, "National Baby Week," Kingsway House, Kingsway, London, W.C.